

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews:

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

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Tri-ValleyCulturalJews.org

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<http://trivalleyculturaljews.wordpress.com/>



Affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Our mission statement: "A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion."

Upcoming Events for January 2012

Wednesday, January 4: Planning meeting. 7 p.m. - 1817 Sinclair Dr. in Pleasanton. All members welcome.

Sunday, January 8: Jewish Culture School 10:30 a.m. in Castro Valley.

Sunday, January 8: Philosopher's Café. Adults get together and chat about a chosen topic. This month's topic: Is Human Nature basically competitive or cooperative?

Saturday, January 14: Movie night and Havdalah – 4 pm at the Looney's in San Ramon. An Evite will be sent out with more details. The movie for adults will be *The Infidel*, a 2010 British comedy film directed by Josh Appignanesi and written by David Baddiel. There will be a movie for kids in another room. This will be a potluck instead of pizza night, but the main dish will be provided by the hosts. Please r.s.v.p. through Evite or 510-444-1808 if you are coming and what you will be bringing.

Sunday, January 22: Jewish Culture School 10:30 a.m. in Castro Valley.

Looking Ahead to February

Feb. 1 - Planning meeting. 7 p.m. - 1817 Sinclair Dr. in Pleasanton. All members welcome

Feb. 5 - Tu B'shvat celebration and seder. Location TBA (possibly the Lindsay Wildlife Museum).

Feb. 19 – Jewish Culture School.

Jewish Culture School

Our last JCS was a look at how Jews in Iraq lived, as there are now no more Jews living there. We heard a Jewish folktale in which we learned that Jews worked as potters in Iraq. Afterward, we made our own pottery. We also made eggplant with Iraqi hamou/heloo (sweet and sour) sauce which was a traditional food of Jews there. We danced to Iraqi music and learned the song *It Could be a Wonderful World*.

Message from the President

Christmas time is here. As an adult I now realize what I never did as a child; there are two Christmas holidays, one religious and one secular. The problem is that these two holidays fall on the same day and have the same name. It is this duality that caused confusion for me as a child and still does as an adult. Growing up, you never could have convinced me that Christmas was a secular holiday. My family and the rest of the Jews I knew were clearly left out on this day. It was movies and Chinese food for us because they were the only options, (I don't know how the Chinese felt about this) and I puzzled over how Santa fit into the story. Now I do celebrate Christmas as a secular holiday along with Chanukah as a cultural holiday, but I do still find that if I say I celebrate Christmas, without also saying Chanukah, I feel people make assumptions about my religion.

Hello From CSJO

As you have heard, from your own community's newsletter, your CSJO delegate, the CSJO newsletter and the study researchers, CSJO is undertaking a restructuring study. It is being designed to develop procedures and establish an organization to help CSJO better promote and support secular Jewish life.

As part of the restructuring study there will be a survey...we need to hear from you, our members, what CSJO could and should do to help *you* to express your secular Jewish identity, and your local community to promote and support secular Jewish life.

This survey will be sent out by the end of January 2012. I urge you to participate in it and return the questionnaire in a timely manner. It will be your opportunity to let your voice be heard about the direction that you want CSJO to take.

My wish to all of you, CSJO friends and their families, is for a Happy and Healthy 2012. And, again, sholem in the world wouldn't be a bad idea!

Rifke

Who We Are

President	Kevin Coren 925-240-5612
Board Members	Judith Seid 925-485-1049 Phyllis Looney 925-803-0574 Jamie Ireland 510-888-1404
Newsletter	Marisa Castaldini 925-240-5612 Phyllis Looney 925-803-0574 Ed Looney 925-803-0574
Webmasters	Noah King 925-371-8585 Solomon Ireland 510-888-1404
JCS Teachers	Judith Seid, Jamie Ireland
Phone Chair	Phyllis Looney
Family Shabbat/Havdalah Coordinator –	Jamie Ireland
Publicity	open
Movie Coordinator	Wendy Berenson 925-829-0554

Mishpokha (family)

Birthdays: Jacky Poulsen, Albert Rothman, Kevin Coren, Marisa Castaldini, Levi Coren.

Yortseit: Goldie Chavenson, mother of Deborah Grossman, January 25

This Month in Jewish History

The 28th of Tevet, which falls this year on January 23, is the birthday of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the champion of the revival of spoken Hebrew. Born in 1858, Ben Yehuda (then Eliezer Yitkhak Perelman), influenced by the nationalist romantic movement, moved to Palestine in 1881 determined to revive Hebrew as an everyday Jewish language. When his son was born, the next year, Ben Yehuda and his wife Deborah vowed to speak only Hebrew with him and allow him no contact with other languages. When Deborah would occasionally slip into song in Russian, Ben Yehuda would become enraged. Ben Yehuda published a dictionary and coined many new words that Hebrew hadn't needed before. In 1922, just a month before Ben Yehuda died, the British finally recognized Hebrew as the official language of the Jews of Palestine, which they had won from the Ottomans in the First World War.

Hanukkah

Our Hanukkah party was a grand success. This year the latke making was started earlier than usual which meant that our wonderful chefs (Phyllis Looney, Kevin Coren, Solomon Ireland and Noah King) were able to enjoy the party and not be stuck in the kitchen. Our group came through with many gifts for our Bosnian family which were wrapped in wrapping paper made by the kids (Carol King made fun shapes in potato halves, including a menorah, that were used to stamp designs on the plain wrapping paper). Thank you to all who brought or sent gifts for the family. Phyllis and Ed Looney delivered the gifts to Jewish Family & Children's Services and Kathryn wanted everyone to know how thankful she was for receiving all these wonderful gifts that would be given to our adopted family.

Candle lighting was done by the children, with each candle representing one or more "Heroes of National Liberation." Here they are: Africa – Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Middle East – Judah Maccabees, Moses, Asia- Gandhi, Dali Lama, Europe – Lech Walesa, Oskar Schindler, South America – Che Guevara, Simon Bolivar, The Caribbean – Jose Marti, Toussaint L'Ouverture, North America – George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Harvey Milk, Harriet Tubman, Caesar Chavez, Oceania – Cory Aquino.

Thank you to all the volunteers who made this event work – Wendy Berenson for coordinating and shopping, Carol King for crafts, Judy Seid for leading, Levi Coren for providing a funky Hanukkah story on PowerPoint, created just for the heck of it because there aren't any Hanukkah specials, and to our set-up and clean-up crew including but not limited to David Gates and Ed Looney.





Tri-Valley Cultural Jews
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